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ABSTRACT

All incoming students at the Defense Language Institute now participate in a 3-hour workshop to prepare students better, psychologically, for the experience of learning a foreign language in an intensive program. The workshop includes an attitude survey constructed by researchers, discussion of a questionnaire on the myths and realities of foreign language learning, information on learning strategies specific to foreign language study, an exercise to develop confidence, an exercise for coping with frustration, and discussion of the characteristics of the ideal foreign language learner. An earlier study compared the attitudes of two student groups, one participating in the pre-course workshop and one not participating. Results indicate little difference between the two groups in the pattern of anxiety and anxiety abatement, a finding attributed to the possible confounding effect of the language course itself. However, it is concluded that anxiety associated with foreign language learning is a very real issue with important consequences for instruction, testing, and curriculum development. In addition, the program is seen as benefitting individual students and also helping to transform a disparate student group into a cohesive community for intensive language learning. (MSE)

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Dispelling Students' Fears and Misconceptions about Foreign Language Study:

The Foreign Language Anxiety Workshop at The Defense Language Institute

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Introduction

A *Strategy for Excellence* (1986), the policy publication of The Defense Language Institute (DLI), affirms that "(t)he academic environment (at DLI) shall encourage controlled instructional experimentation or research" (p. 1). Reacting to the fundamental interest of DLI to promote research intra muros, the authors created a three-hour "Foreign Language Anxiety Workshop" that all beginning students in the departments of German, Korean, Spanish, and Russian at The Defense Language Institute (DLI), San Francisco, attend before entering their first class. The workshop was created to prepare students better psychologically for the experience of learning a foreign language in an intensive program.

The workshop, an activity in which all incoming students in DLI, San Francisco, now participate includes:

1. attitudinal survey constructed by the researchers – *Survey of Attitudes Specific to the Foreign Language Classroom* (*SASFLC*) – to assess the effect of the workshop. The survey, with a 5-point Likert Scale of 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree, contains eleven items about foreign language anxiety and five items about the common myths of foreign langauge learning (e.g., It is necessary to have a special "ear" in order to learn a foreign language well.). It is distributed several times in the

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six-month (Spanish), eight-month (German), or ten-month (Korean, Russian) program;
2. discussion about a questionnaire based on Paul Pimsleur's renowned text *How to Learn a Foreign Language* (1980). The questionnaire is entitled "The Myths and the Realities of Foreign Language Learning";
3. information on learning strategies specific to foreign language study;
4. exercise to develop confidence;
5. exercise to aid in coping with frustration;
6. discussion of the characteristics of the ideal foreign language learner.

The workshop, in addition to benefiting the individual student, helps to transform a disparate group of individuals, who will be sharing both classrooms and housing for six-months or more, into a cohesive community of language learners.

Background: The Topic in the Professional Literature

Research investigating aspects of the affective domain by Lambert et al (1961), Pimsleur et al (1962, 1964), Kelly (1965), Savignon (1972), and Brewster (1972) primarily focused on the issues of motivation in foreign language learners and their attitudes towards members of the target language community. The topic of anxiety as specifically related to foreign language study has been studied; however, the research results have been mixed. In *Toward a Philosophy of Second Language Learning and Teaching*, Chastain (1980) laments the "lack of consistent research evidence" (p. 23) on the role of anxiety, personality (e.g., reserved versus outgoing personality types), and creativity in the foreign language classroom.

Scovel (1978) provides a comprehensive review of anxiety research in foreign language learning in the 70s and addresses the issue of seemingly contradictory research results in his article "The Effect of Affect on Foreign Language Learning: A Review of the Anxiety Research." He points out that studies by Swain and Burnaby (1976), Tucker, Hamayan, and Genesee (1976), Chastain (1975), Backman (1976), and Kleinmann (1977) reveal incomplete and complete correlations between anxiety and measures of language proficiency. For example, in their research with English-speaking French immersion children, Swain and Burnaby found a negative correlation between anxiety and one measure of the children's proficiency in French; cu-

riously, there were no other significant correlations with any of the other proficiency measures used. The work by Tucker et al revealed that anxiety correlated with only one of four measures of French proficiency. Backman found that her study subjects, the two worst Spanish-speaking ESL students, received, respectively, the highest and the lowest score on an anxiety measure. Chastain's research showed the negative and positive effects of test anxiety. In the former case (a correlational analysis), there was a significant negative correlation between test anxiety and final course grade for university students in a beginning French class using the audio-lingual method. In the latter case (a regression analysis), test anxiety correlated positively with the final course grade for university students in a beginning Spanish class using the "regular" method. Here, test anxiety constituted a significant predictor factor for the final course grade in Spanish.

In his article, Scovel emphasizes the important distinction made by Kleinmann between "facilitating" and "debilitating" anxiety (p. 105 in Kleinmann) and insists that making this distinction can clarify ambiguous experimental results. Hypothesizing that a foreigner learning English would avoid most frequently those English structures (e.g., infinitive complements, direct object pronouns, the passive voice, etc.) which contrasted most with the foreigner's native language structures, Kleinmann studied the English output of Arabic and Spanish students using a variety of tests, ultimately confirming his hypothesis. He also hypothesized that facilitating anxiety would encourage a learner to use those English structures most frequently avoided by members of the learner's native language group. Kleinmann confirmed this second, hypothesis, finding that Arabic and Spanish students who received high scores on measures of facilitating anxiety (e.g., "Nervousness while using English helps me do better") used more complicated English structures than their native peers.

In the 80s, Young (1986) has investigated the relationship between anxiety and foreign language oral proficiency ratings, finding significant negative correlations between anxiety and the *ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview* (*ACTFL OPI*, to be distinguished from the *Interagency Language Roundtable OPI*). However, the correlations were no longer significant after the effects of foreign language ability were taken into account. As Young explains: "(O)nce the effect of an individual's language proficiency was accounted for, oral performance no longer decreased as anxiety increased" (p. 439). Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) examined the effect of induced anxiety on the content of oral descriptions in the target language about stimulus pictures. The researchers found that subjects involved in a treatment especially designed to increase their anxiety by making them feel

"on the spot" (as Steinberg and Horwitz put it) describe visual stimuli less interpretively, i.e, with fewer projective references to events not actually shown in the pictures, than do subjects in a non-threatening, relaxed setting.

"The Support Group for Foreign Language Learning" at the University of Texas, Austin

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) did further research in anxiety in the foreign language classroom in 1983 with beginning foreign language students at the University of Texas. After determining through a survey that a number of the students who were to start a foreign language course in the summer session of 1983 expressed interest in a "Support Group for Foreign Language Learning," they organized a series of discussion sessions which met twice weekly for the summer term. Working with two groups of fifteen students each, Horwitz et al provided information in effective learning strategies, exercises in anxiety management, and discussion on the difficulties and rewards of foreign language learning. The researchers developed an anxiety measure, the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (*FLCAS*), which was administered to the students in the third week of the semester. Results revealed that in the majority of items about foreign language anxiety (nineteen of thirty-three items), a third or more of the students indicated that they suffered from foreign language anxiety; in seven times, over one-half indicated the same reaction. Horwitz (1986) has recently made the five items from the *French Class Anxiety Scale* created by Gardner, Clement, Smythe, & Smythe (1979) generic and added them to the item pool for the *FLCAS*. Horwitz' latest results support the reliability and validity of the *FLCAS*. The project begun at DLI, San Francisco, though similar in intent, differs substantially in research format.

Purpose and Rationale for the Foreign Language Anxiety Workshop

The aim of the researchers was to determine whether the three-hour workshop would have a statistically significant effect on student attitudes, specifically, anxiety about foreign language study in the classroom setting. The researchers assessed the lasting effect of the workshop through an instrument created by the authors—*Survey of Attitudes Specific to the Foreign*

Language Classroom (*SASFLC*)—which was distributed two weeks after the workshop. (A panel of one statistician, one foreign language measurement expert, and one foreign language instructor well-versed in testing judged the validity of the *SASFLC*. A construct validation project is currently underway.) The research schedule was as follows:

1. Day 1: Survey 1 administration (to determine anxiety level prior to beginning the course); workshop for experimental group/registration for the control group; start of course;
2. Day 14: Survey 2 administration (to determine workshop effect);
3. Course Midpoint: Survey 3 administration;
4. Course End: Survey 4 administration. (All four surveys were identical in content; only the ordering of the items varied.)

After examining the final outcome of the statistical analyses (which are discussed in detail in "Results" below), the authors realized that the effect of the intensive foreign language course itself most likely confounded the effect of the treatment (here, the workshop). Expressed differently, the nature of the course itself, not the workshop, could be responsible for increasing or decreasing student anxiety levels. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to attempt to distinguish the effect of the workshop from the effect of the course on the learner's anxiety level. To be able to more accurately determine workshop effect, the workshop should be given, as in the DLI study, before the course begins; nevertheless, Survey 2 should also be distributed before the start of the course so as to eliminate course effect as a confounding variable. The authors could not arrange this, however, due to administrative obstacles.

As the researchers were also interested in examining any changes in anxiety level throughout the six, eight, and ten-month intensive course, they administered the *SASFLC* at course midpoint and at course end.

Method

Subjects

The subjects are briefly described in the "Introduction" above. The majority are high-school graduates between 18 and 21 years of age who have

scored well in the *Defense Language Aptitude Battery* (*DLAB*), a standardized measure of aptitude for foreign language learning. After arrival at DLI, the subjects in each language group were then divided into an experimental group (with workshop) and a control group (without workshop) via randomized selection. One-hundred seventy-nine students participated in the project (20-Spanish, 65-Russian, 66-German, 28-Korean) from five subsequent inputs of students to DLI in April, May, July, August, and September 1987. Subjects from all four languages were equally distributed by language in both the experimental and control groups. Students fluent in a foreign language or with more than one college semester of foreign language were eliminated from the study. In order to check for homogeneity between the experimental and the control groups regarding aptitude for foreign language learning, a t test was performed using the subjects' scores from the *DLAB*. The results of the t test showed no significant differences in the pooled *DLAB* scores between the experimental and the control group ($t = .499$, $p = .6183$). (See Table 1.)

Table 1. Averages For Each Dependent Variable, By Treatment

	With Workshop	Without Workshop	
DLAB Scores	103.2 (99)	102.3 (78)	t = .499 p = .6183
Dependent Variables			
Survey 1	37.4 (100)	37.9 (79)	t = .4099 p = .6824
Survey 2	37.1 (98)	36.9 (75)	t = .1697 p = .8655
Survey 3	41.7 (23)	40.4 (16)	t = .4165 p = .6794

NOTE: The number in parentheses is the sample size.

In order to check further for homogeneity between the experimental and the control groups, a t test was performed using the subjects' responses in Survey 1 in order to assess student anxiety levels about foreign language study in the classroom prior to the workshop and the start of the course.

The results revealed no significant differences between the experimental and the control groups ($t = .4099$, $p = .6824$). (See Table 1.)

Materials

The materials described in the introduction were piloted with three different groups of students in three workshops before drafting the final version of the survey and exercises. (Copies of the materials are available from the authors upon request.)

Procedures

After arrival at DLI, San Francisco, each group of students was first divided by language group and then randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group. Both groups took the first survey after learning from researchers that:

1. the aim of the survey was to better the existing teaching/learning program at DLI;
2. strict confidentiality would be maintained as only the two researchers and a statistician would see their answers;
3. honesty in answering was extremely important.

The experimental group then participated in the three-hour workshop; the control group completed the military registration process for new students. The students in the experimental group were informed that the workshop was a routine activity organized for incoming students. Immediately after the workshop, all the students in both groups began the intensive foreign language course in their respective language.

Two weeks after the workshop, after two full weeks of course work, the students in both groups took the Survey 2. At midpoint in the course and at the end of the course (one month before the final comprehensive proficiency examination), students in both groups took the third and fourth surveys, respectively.

Below, the research format:

	Group 1 (experimental)	Group 2 (control)
Day 1	survey; workshop	survey
Day 14	survey	survey
Course midpoint	survey	survey
Course end	survey	survey

Concerning controlling for methodological, instructor, and time differences, as all instructors at DLI enroll and graduate from a uniform methods course that the Division of Faculty/Staff Development coordinates, it can be assumed that all instructors profess and practice a proficiency-oriented teaching philosophy aimed at maximizing communicative competence. In this sense, a basic homogeneity of methodology can be assumed. Regarding instructor and time differences, the current team-teaching system at DLI provides for the matching of one team of four or five instructors with each new language course. The team teaches the entire course which can last six, eight, or ten months according to language. Thus, it can be assumed that the instructor variable (here, defined as a team) for a given course remains constant, as does the course length according to language.

Results

The results are:

1. In terms of the treatment (here, the workshop), there were no statistically significant results between the experimental and the control group as shown in a t test performed on the results from Survey 2 ($t = .1697$, $p = .8655$). (See Table 1.)
2. In terms of the treatment (here, the workshop), there were no statistically significant results between the experimental and the control group as shown in a t test performed on the results from Survey 3 ($t = .4165$, $p = .6794$). (See Table 1.)
3. Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, reliability analysis for internal consistency in the SASFLC was .90 for the eleven items in the survey that deal directly with foreign language anxiety.
4. Pooled percentages in Survey 1 (administered prior to the start of the workshop and the course in order to assess student anxiety levels about foreign language study in the classroom) revealed that anxiety afflicts approximately one-fourth of the students when speaking, approximately one-third when listening, and approximately one-sixth when writing and reading. (See Table 2.)
5. Pooled percentages in Survey 2 (administered two weeks

after the workshop and the start of the course in order to assess lasting workshop effects) revealed that anxiety afflicts approximately one-third to one-half of the students when speaking, approximately one-half when listening, and approximately one-fifth when writing and reading. (See Table 2.)

6. Pooled percentages in Survey 3 (administered half-way through the course) revealed a reduction in anxiety.
7. Pooled percentages in Survey 4 showed no anxiety level.

Discussion

The results reveal that the lack of statistically significant differences between the experimental (with workshop) and control (without workshop) groups in terms of the treatment could be due to the confounding effect of the course itself. Future research will schedule Survey 1, the workshop, and Survey 2 before the start of the course so as to discern more accurately workshop effect.

Although there were no significant differences between the experimental and the control groups, pooled percentages in Survey 1 reveal disconcerting levels of anxiety in incoming students prior to the start of workshop and the course itself: approximately one-third suffer from anxiety when listening and one-fourth suffer from anxiety when speaking. Pooled percentages in Survey 2 show increased anxiety in students after the start of the course: approximately one-half suffer from anxiety when listening and one-third to one-half when speaking. Regarding writing and reading, approximately one-sixth of the students feel anxiety in Survey 1 and one-fifth in Survey 2.

The decrease in anxiety in Survey 3 and the absence of anxiety in Survey 4 indicate that students are aware of a general tendency at DLI to retain students in a course once the half-way point is reached. Prior to course midpoint, students can be asked to leave a program because of low grades.

The results are consistent with findings in the study by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) in which over one-third of the students surveyed in the *FLCAS* indicated in the majority of items about foreign language anxiety (nineteen of thirty-three items) that they experienced foreign language anxiety; over one-half of the students indicated the same in seven items.

These results suggest that anxiety in the foreign language classroom is a very real issue with important consequences for the classroom, testing,

Table 2. Percentages Of Strongly Agree and Agree

	Survey 1 (Course beginning)	Survey 2 (2 wks. later)	Survey 3 (course midpoint)	Survey 4 (course end)
3. I fear making a mistake when I speak in a FL in a classroom setting.	26%	34%	19%	0%
4. I become anxious when I am being spoken to in a FL in a classroom setting.	22%	41%	18%	0%
5. I fear failing this course.	45%	56%	21%	0%
7. I become anxious when I am asked to write in a FL in a classroom setting.	14%	17%	11%	0%
9. I fear making a mistake in writing in a FL in a classroom setting.	15%	19%	8%	0%
10. I fear making a mistake in reading in a FL in a classroom setting.	17%	18%	11%	0%
11. I become anxious when I have to speak in a FL in a classroom setting.	26%	46%	26%	0%
12. I fear receiving a low final grade (D or below) in this course.	45%	53%	21%	0%
14. I fear not understanding what the teacher is saying in a FL when I am in a FL classroom.	40%	42%	26%	0%
15. I feel silly when I have to speak a FL in a classroom setting.	10%	8%	11%	0%
16. I become anxious when I have to read in a FL in a classroom setting.	15%	22%	13%	0%

and curriculum development. Further research must be done with the ultimate goal of lowering the level of debilitating anxiety that, as two research studies suggest, affects approximately one-fourth to one-half of our post-secondary students.

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